bad moon on the rise

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/5395580.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Gravity Falls
Relationship:	Stanford Pines/Stanley Pines
Additional Tags:	Sibling Incest, Unrequited Love, Angst, Jealousy, Self-Esteem Issues, Internalized Homophobia, Off-screen Relationship(s), Masturbation, Sexual Fantasy, Car Sex, Frottage, Dancing
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2016-01-05 Words: 5,444 Chapters: 1/1

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by calciseptine

Summary

As the first chords of *Lodi* strum to life, Ford's sanity quietly falls to pieces.

Notes

This is, for all intents and purposes, song fic. I tried my best to avoid the mistakes I made in my youth, when I was but a wee lass navigating fandom for the first time, but alas! I am mortal and flawed. Also, I want everyone to know how *insanely difficult* it is to write porn to 1960s swamp rock. There's masochism and then there's *this*.

Many thanks to busmall for the beta. YOU ARE THE BEST MY DEAR AND YOU DESERVE ALL THE THANKS. ♥

Please note that this story is set vaguely within canon before Stanley was kicked out of the house, so Stan and Ford are seventeen. Stan is also dating Carla; I realize she and Stan probably dated after Stan was kicked out (as Stan was depressingly not pudgy in his flashback), but I wielded the mighty power bequeathed to me by artistic license and pushed their romance back a few years.

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In August of 1969, Stan spends all his pocket money on Creedence Clearwater Revival's album *Green River*, and plays it until Ford contemplates murder.

The music itself is not what drives Ford to the brink of insanity. He likes what he hears despite having heard each song approximately ten thousand times—this is only a slight exaggeration—and, when the mood takes him, he will hum along with the long memorized lyrics. The twang of the guitar and the steady rhythm of the drums suit the waxing heat of summer, and it makes Ford want to close his book, lay back on his bed, and let the sound wash over him.

No, the music is not the problem.

The problem is Stan.

"I think I'm gettin' it!" Stan exclaims triumphantly as the last strains of *The Night Time Is The Right Time* fade, the needle scratching static before it slides harmlessly from the vinyl disc's edge. "Whaddya think, poindexter?"

Ford looks up from the page he has been staring at for the past nine songs and takes in the splotchy, rosy flush on Stan's cheeks and the sweat beading on Stan's exposed forehead. Since cutting his hair short several months ago, Stan has taken to slicking the unruly mess back with too much cheap pomade, and Ford still cannot bear how well it emphasizes Stan's masculine jawline.

"I am not an expert on dancing," Ford answers as nonchalantly as possible, tearing his eyes from the blunt angles of Stan's face to the poster-covered wall behind him. "If I had an opinion, it would be invalid."

Stan snorts, and his eyes and his shoulders roll upward in exasperation. Stan's body language has only gotten louder with age, his gestures overdramatic and present in a way that wavers between charismatic and obnoxious. Ford has been exposed to Stan's personality for a lifetime, and he has never been able to decide if he is charmed or annoyed.

"You don' hafta be an expert," Stan tells him, as though Ford were simple. "You just gotta tell me if I look like an idiot."

And this—this is why Ford cannot listen to *Green River* without wanting to scream, because for the past three weeks, Stan has been teaching himself how to dance in preparation for his date with Carla McCorkle.

"Well?" Stan prompts. His white t-shirt is damp with perspiration and the cotton sticks to the center of his broad chest. "Do I look good or not?"

"Yes," Ford says haltingly, choked by a deadly and unwanted combination of jealousy and arousal. "You look fine."

Stan's smile is blinding.

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After purchasing *Green River*, Stan had lugged the unused record player up from the family living room to his and Ford's shared bedroom. He put it atop his dresser—one of the few places on his side of the room that was not covered in food wrappers or miscellaneous junk—then cleared the floor by kicking all his dirty clothes under his bed.

It had been funny, the first few times. Stan didn't know how to keep his balance or coordinate his limbs with any sort of grace. Mostly, Stan stumbled around their bedroom and knocked into the furniture while Ford watched him from behind his book-of-the-day, fighting back laughter as Stan swore freely and frequently.

Then something in Stan clicked, and all hilarity vanished.

"I see a bad moon rising," Stan warbles tonelessly after he's flipped the record, side two starting for the second time that afternoon. Stan's gruff voice is at odds with the clear, upbeat notes that fill the air. "I see trouble on the way. I see earthquakes and lightnin'—I see bad times today."

The cautionary lyrics are a portent of the worst kind. They are as thick and as oppressive as the humid summer air that creeps in through the open window and—combined with the weight of Stan's voice—they are heavy enough to sink into the delicate marrow of Ford's bones. Ford can no more ignore the words than he can ignore the temptation literally dancing in front of him.

"Don't go around tonight," Stan belts out as he twists his hips and his shoulders, as he steps this way and that way. He snaps his fingers and bops his head to the tempo. His mouth, bitten plump and spit slick, work with the ups and downs of the song, the ultimate test of Ford's sanity. "Well, it's bound to take your life—"

There's a bad moon on the rise, finishes Ford helplessly, pinned to his mattress by the song and the sway of Stan's body.

Stan has always been physical. He is not at all like Ford, who is too hyperaware of himself to be anything but graceless, and he learns best kinesthetically. This, perhaps, is why Ford is unsurprised to discover that Stan is an excellent dancer. Yet—while Ford's theoretical knowledge eliminates any shock—it does nothing to prepare Ford for the reality of Stan moving around like a rock star in their childhood bedroom.

It's obscene. Stan's movements border on carnal and the slide of his bare feet over the worn carpet is sensual rather than silly. Stan recreates the dance moves they've seen in movies or on television, though some are standardized routines that have been printed in teen magazines. Ford thinks that the maneuvers should look as ridiculous as they sound—the Pony, the Watusi, *the Mashed Potato*—but when Stan flows into the steps and twists, the dances become pure sin.

"I hear hurricanes ablowing! I know the end is coming soon!" Stan rolls his hips so blatantly that Ford's mouth goes dry. "I fear rivers overflowing—I hear the voice of rage and ruin—alright!"

Ford cannot help but think of sex when Stan dances. He cannot help but think of sex *with* Stan when Stan thrusts his pelvis against the dissatisfying air; when Stan stops singing because he's breathing too hard; when Stan's mouth hangs open as he pants; when his eyes close as he gets caught up in the blissful freedom of dancing without reservation. Would Stan look the same, Ford wonders, if Ford pushed him down to the floor and forced his fingers into his brother's wet, begging mouth—if he sat on Stan's lap and gave Stan something substantial to grind up into—

Hope you got your things together, John Fogerty taunts. *Hope you are quite prepared to die.*

It borders on impossible, but Ford manages to summon the last of his shredded willpower and forces his gaze back to his book. The promise of knowledge is not half as enticing as the sight of Stan, the lure of science weak in comparison to the movement on the periphery of Ford's vision, to the hot throb between Ford's legs.

What did I do to deserve this? Ford thinks, immensely irate and desperately aroused. His knees are pressed together so tightly his thighs tremble and he is vaguely light-headed from the confusing swirl of emotions in his chest and the unrelenting heat of the room. *I'm enough of a freak as it is. A six-fingered nerd—let alone a six-fingered homosexual who wants to fuck his twin—his perfectly normal, perfectly straight twin—*

The song eventually fades, bringing an end to Stan's dancing as well as the longest two and a half minutes of Ford's existence. Oblivious to Ford's distress, Stan collapses onto his unmade bed and laughs joyously, his elation buoyed by the release of endorphins.

"Yeah," Stan proclaims as the first chords of *Lodi* strum to life and Ford's sanity quietly falls to pieces. "Yeah, I look *real* good!"

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Sometime between punching a greaser in the mouth and his first date with Carla McCorkle, Stan's adolescence—and a renewed interest in boxing—won the war against his preteen chubbiness.

Ford should be envious of how swiftly and easily Stan transitioned from being a boy to becoming a man. Puberty has not been as kind to Ford; his height now matches what his big hands, his big feet, and his big ears have always promised, but his growth spurt has stretched him as thin as salt water taffy on a hook. He knows that he is a mess of gangly angles compared to Stan, yet instead of envy, all Ford can muster is a warm coil of appreciation for Stan's bulky physique.

"Gonna take her to the new diner by the wharf that she likes," Stan babbles as he searches his closet for an unwrinkled shirt. He has just gotten out of the shower and is clad in nothing but his boxer briefs. "Hope it's cheap—I only got like, ten bucks to my name."

Ford has not moved from his bed since Stan finished practicing his dance steps. His inappropriate erection had taken an equally inappropriate amount of time to dissipate and, when he was finally calm enough to contemplate moving to his desk, Stan had returned from

the bathroom, clean and freshly shaven, his hair damp against the nape of his neck and water droplets clinging to the dark curls that bloomed on his pectorals.

Goddamn, Ford curses internally as Stan squints at a brick red monstrosity he dug out from the pit of his wardrobe. It has long bell sleeves and enormous lapels. *Why, why, why is this happening to me?*

"Whaddya think?" Stan asks as he pulls the shirt out and holds it against his chest. "It doesn't look like I'm trying too hard, does it?"

When layered against the dull red fabric, the golden hue of Stan's summer tan intensifies and the earthy brown of his eyes and hair deepen. Anyone with a pulse would be drawn to him, let alone Carla McCorkle, who already has enough interest in Stan to agree to a date. Ford's insides twist as he imagines her noticing the same things he notices and liking those things as much as he likes them.

"Maybe a little bit," Ford lies, because he knows that Stan will consider his advice, shrug, and put the garment back in the closet. The small twinge of guilt he feels when Stan does this lasts long enough for Ford to compromise with his conscience and suggest, "What about the olive button down?"

It takes Stan several minutes to find the aforementioned garment, and Ford struggles to keep his expression impassive as Stan searches, as he bends and stretches and kneels. Stan is still vaguely soft around the middle—his abdomen curves convexly outward and his hips carry a hint of padding—but he is otherwise heavily muscular, his undeniable brawn shifting powerfully beneath his sometimes smooth, sometimes deliciously hairy skin.

Ford aches with the unfulfilled desire to touch every inch of his brother's body. He wants to cover Stan's exposed skin with his own—wants to bare the flesh hidden by Stan's flimsy underwear—but he will never act upon his strange and strangling impulses. All he will ever do—all he can helplessly do—is look, and the idea that someone else—that *Carla McCorkle* can—

Ford grinds his teeth. It is useless to think he has any right to be jealous.

"Ah-ha!" Stan proclaims triumphantly when he discovers the button down. It had been thrown over the back of his unused desk chair; it is clean and mostly unwrinkled. "Found it!"

Ford watches as Stan immediately proceeds to wriggle into the shirt. He does the plastic buttons up to the middle of his sternum—just far enough to expose a few solid inches of thick, curling chest hair—and then rolls his sleeve cuffs up past his elbows. The flex of his forearms and the taut pull of fabric between Stan's shoulder blades is a deadly combination; if Ford had previously hypothesized that the button down would be less visually magnetic than the shirt Stan originally pulled out of the closet, the physical evidence before him concludes something very, very different.

"You should wear your brown trousers with that," Ford tells Stan as his brother smooths his hands down the front of his shirt. "And you can wear my good shoes, if you promise not to spill any soda on them again."

Stan flashes a bright smile in Ford's direction and praises, "You're the best, Sixer."

No, I'm not, Ford thinks bitterly as Stan follows his advice and trades his straight leg jeans and battered chucks for a pair of clingy slacks and polished leather shoes. *I'm really, really not.*

Once dressed, Stan takes a few minutes to reapply his hair pomade, to rub an irresponsible amount of cologne into his skin, and to don a thick gold chain with a flat pendant and several heavy gold rings. He should look like a sleazy used car salesman; instead, he looks like a magazine model before a photoshoot, carefully tailored to be effortlessly handsome and approachable at the same time.

"Not bad," Stan concludes as he looks at himself in the mirror. His mouth curls into a confident smirk that does not waver when he turns to Ford and lifts one straight eyebrow suggestively. "Looks like I'll be coming home later than usual, doesn't it?"

"If you keep the conversation to a minimum, maybe," Ford deadpans, struggling to keep his tone as flat as possible.

"No promises, poindexter," Stan laughs. His cheeks are flushed and his shoulders are loose and easy. Ford tightens his hands into fists; it is all he can do to keep from leaping off his bed and doing something he will regret, such as tugging Stan into a kiss and showing him what he could have if he wanted. "Don't stay up too late reading your lame nerd books, kay?"

"No promises, knucklehead," Ford replies.

Then—with one last wink—Stan grabs his thin wallet, opens their bedroom door, and leaves.

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Afternoon becomes evening in slow and inevitable increments, and the light in the room dims with the setting sun. Ford remains stretched across the length of his narrow bed as the hours fade; he is aware of the passage of time, but he feels immune to it as he stares at the ceiling. Without Stan, he has let the pretense of his book slip from his fingers and to the floor.

Ford tries not to imagine how Stan's date with Carla McCorkle is progressing. He does not want to drive himself mad with the infinite possibilities of what may happen, so he closes his eyes and listens to the sounds of the mundane that float in through the open window: the steady chatter of patrons coming and going from the establishments on either side of the pawn shop, the shrieks of children playing in the nearby vacant parking lot, the rumble of cars as they drive down the street. All these distractions fade with the twilight, however, and Ford—

It is the silence that possesses Ford to get out of bed, to cross the minimal space to Stan's dresser, and to start side two of *Green River*. He turns the volume down to low so that only the barest strains vibrate through the syrupy air; the music enhances the heavy surreality of the night, and makes it easy for Ford to peel off his short-sleeved button down, undo the placket of his plaid trousers, and toe out of his socks. It is warm enough for Ford to be comfortable in the athletic shirt and worn underwear that remain.

I see a bad moon arising, John Fogerty sings as Ford slides back atop his striped sheets. *I see trouble on the way. I see earthquakes and lightnin'. I see bad times today…*

Ford exhales shakingly as his hand skims down the medial line of his torso, as he presses the heel of his palm against his dick. The first few strains of any Creedence Clearwater Revival song are enough to make him half-hard. The twang of the guitar makes him think about the obscene roll of Stan's hips as he dances—makes Ford think about the roll of Stan's hips again his own—and all of Ford's blood rushes south.

Fuck, Ford thinks as he rocks into the heat of his six-fingered hand. *Why am I such a goddamned freak—?*

The first track on side two ends and melts seamlessly into the second. *Lodi* is Stan's favorite track; he often gets lost in the lyrics, throwing back his head and making Ford wonder how Stan's stubble would feel against his mouth as he sucked the salt from Stan's skin. Electric, Ford imagines. Raw. If Stan were his—if Ford spent the time he wished to on the lovely planes and hollows of Stan's thick neck—Stan's throat would be a shrine built of careful bruises.

But Stan is not Ford's. He is Carla's, and—

"Don't think about it," Ford reprimands himself even as his masochistic brain drags the unwanted memory of the tiny, ruby red hickey Stan had shown off the week before. His stomach gives an ugly lurch and his hand falls away from his groin. "Don't think, don't think, don't, don't, *don't*."

The sudden spike of misplaced loathing and futile anger is impossible to ignore, however, and Ford grits his teeth as his emotions crest. Intellectually, Ford knows that Carla is a sweet girl who makes Stan happy—who bolsters his low self-esteem—who brings Stan out of his meticulously constructed shell—yet Ford cannot help but resent her.

Ford is jealous of her. Carla can meet Stan at a diner and hold Stan's hand over the sticky table while they split a chocolate milkshake; Carla can dance with Stan while rock music blares at full volume from the neon-lit jukebox; Carla can press the length of her body against Stan's without worrying who might see; and Carla can kiss Stan, and be assured that those affections are reciprocated, and wanted. As another man—as Stan's fraternal twin—Ford can do none of that, no matter how much he wishes he could.

Yet while Ford knows all of this logically, there is nothing logical about his feelings. They are irrational and unfair, and he drowns in them as they overtake him.

It takes the second half of *Lodi* and all of *Cross-Tie Walker* for Ford's surge of jealousy to run its course through his veins. He counts the seconds between his inhales and exhales and blinks at the long, purple shadows cast by the golden streetlight pushing through the cracks in the window blinds. Ford's mood has edged back into neutrality as *Sinister Purpose* strums to life, as the lyrics creep across the carpet and into Ford's ears, whispering, *When the sky is gray—and the moon is hate—*

Ford's traitorous dick twitches with renewed interest.

"Are you kidding me?" Ford mutters as he glances down the length of his body. He hooks his thumbs in the elastic of his whitey tightys and lifts it to expose his violently red cockhead. "How the hell am I still hard…?"

Ford touches a fingertip to his eager slit. He is more sensitive than normal—being half-hard all day has done him no favors—that even this light touch makes Ford hiss. Pre-come beads beneath his finger and he gently rubs the slick away. He knows from long experience that the only way his erection will flag now is if he gives into the demands of his teenage body, and orgasms.

Sinister purpose! Knockin' at your door! the music mocks as Ford sticks a hand down his underwear and curls it around the base of his dick. *Come and take my hand!*

It take several long pulls for Ford to be fully hard again, to be physically ready to pick up where he left off. Yet he cannot continue when he is still mentally stuck. He does not want to think of Stan's date with Carla again or to once more be caught up in the miserable catharsis of jealousy. Instead, he wants to imagine his brother as he was earlier, clean and bright-eyed. He wants to imagine that Stan had hidden his rough Jersey boy edges for him and not Carla. He wants to imagine that the date Stan planned was for them and that when Stan leaves their bedroom, he does not leave alone.

But most of all, Ford wants to imagine that Stan is his.

So he does.

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"Hey," Stan whispers as he steps into Ford's space and intertwines their fingers together like he had when they were children. "I gotta surprise for ya."

"Yeah?" Ford breathes as Stan's stare flickers to his mouth. "What kind of surprise?"

"The surprising kind," Stan replies cheekily.

A bark of dry laughter escapes Ford. "Asshole!" he exclaims a second before Stan closes the distance between them and kisses him. It is a quick, chaste thing, the kind of pecking kiss that evolves with time and familiarity, and it inspires a soft bloom of affection beneath Ford's breastbone. Then—because this is Ford's fantasy—Stan drags him into a second kiss that is slicker and far less innocent than the first. It is the kind of kiss that does not stop until they are dizzy with the need for air. Stan's cheeks are splotched red and his broad chest rises and falls noticeably beneath the clench of Ford's fingers.

"Are ya tryin' to get me to talk?" Stan accuses playfully. "Because I ain't talkin'."

"Nah," Ford answers truthfully. "Wasn't my ulterior motive."

Their smiles are wide and unstoppable as they leave their room, walk downstairs, and pile into the El Diablo. Stan does not let go of Ford's hand unless it is absolutely necessary—and,

because this happens inside Ford's head, it is never necessary, even as Stan drives along the busy eastward streets that head towards the coast.

Stan's surprise is a date on the wharf. Their dinner is a shared cup of salty, thick-cut fries and corn dogs slathered in yellow mustard; their desert is a bloom of finely-spun cotton candy that melts in their mouths and sticks to the pads of their fingers. They play several shooting games, which are fun despite being rigged, and test their strength at the high striker. Stan even attempts to beat Ford at skee-ball—something he hasn't been able to do since they were eleven—and fails miserably. At sunset, when the sky is rose-colored and the ocean is a depthless black, they ride the Ferris wheel; as they crest, Stan cradles Ford's cheek in his hand and kisses him sweetly.

Their date fades with the light of day, and they laugh into each other's mouths as they race over the wooden walkway back to the car. No one cares that they occasionally stop to kiss one another. No one cares that they are both men. No one cares that they are brothers. No one cares that Stan wants Ford as much as Ford wants Stan and—

The last song on side two starts. It is slow-paced and sensual, and the guitar wavers as John Fogerty croons, *You know the night time, oh, is the right time to be with the one you love. I said the night time, oh, is the right time to be with the one you love,* over and over and over again. It is the song Stan starts after he parks his car in a secluded area off the pier and throws Ford a suggestive smile.

"Wanna make out?" Stan purrs.

"Yeah," Ford whines. "Yeah, I wanna."

Eagerly—clumsily—they clamber into the backseat of the car. The cushions are wider than the bench seat in the front, making it easy for Stan to push Ford down onto his back and straddle him. The blunt edges of Stan's knees fit perfectly in the shallow notches of Ford's waist and the heavy weight of Stan's body keeps Ford pinned. Stan uses this to his advantage as he drags a fingertip down the line of Ford's throat to the plane of Ford's stomach to the bulge in Ford's jeans.

"Stanley," Ford whimpers, bucking into Stan's teasing touch.

"Shh," Stan soothes as he tugs the hem of Ford's collared polo and athletic shirt upwards. He coaxes Ford to sit up and lift his arms so he can divest Ford of his layers. When Ford falls back, the bare skin between his shoulder blades sticks tackily to the brown leather seat. He hardly notices; he is too focused on the way Stan deftly undoes the buttons of his olive button-down and peels it from his naked torso. Then he undoes his belt and the placket of his slacks, shoving the offensive fabric around his thighs. His cock is fat and red.

"*Stan,*" Ford gasps as he imagines the impatient fumble of Stan's hands as they remove Ford's jeans and underwear, the edges of Stan's body-warmed rings scraping against Ford's unprotected skin. Ford's grip tightens around his dick; he has been steadily jacking himself for what feels like an eternity, and he can feel his orgasm building just outside his reach. A frustrated moan warbles past his teeth.

"Shh," Stan shushes again. He runs one hot, damp hand down Ford's exposed side. "I'll take care of you."

The air inside the El Diablo is humid and the glass is foggy with condensation. Stan braces his burly arms on either side of Ford's head and brings their seeking mouths and eager pelvises together. Ford moans; Stan's tongue slides in against his and mimics the instinctual rut of their hips as they grind their erections against one another. Ford's toes curl at the sensation.

"Goddamn," Stan curses lowly when they splinter apart for much needed breath. The heavy pendant hanging from Stan's gold chain moves with the sway of their bodies and bumps against Ford's chest. "Goddamn, Sixer, you feel so fuckin' *good*—"

Ford's head swims. He can barely think past the fire smoldering in his gut or the sweet pressure on his cock, and it is this haze that makes his fantasy devolve into a chain of explicit details: how Stan's teeth drag over the swell of his bottom lip—how Stan pinches and twists Ford's nipple between thumb and forefinger—how Stan's thrusts stutter as he bears down and —

A gasp escapes Ford's slackened mouth; his shoulders curl inwards; the muscles in his lean thighs tremble. His dick pulses heavily in his palm and he tightens his hold on the length of his shaft to the point of pain. Sudden and sharp, the hurt pushes Ford over the edge. A whine —high and thin—escapes Ford's parched throat as he writhes against the mussed bedsheets, and comes.

"Fu—uck," Stan hisses against the shell of Ford's ear as Ford twitches through his violent release. "You're—yeah, Sixer. Just—just like that. Just for me."

Stan breaks away from Ford and leans back on his haunches, the crown of his skull crowded against the roof of the car. He curls a heavy hand around his dick and jerks it furiously; his knuckles bump against the full of swell of his belly on the downstroke and every exhale is a small, choked grunt. He is red-faced and sweaty from exertion, and he is, without doubt, the most wonderful thing Ford has ever seen.

"Stanley," Ford mewls, as starved for Stan's orgasm as he was his own. "*Stanley.*"

Ford's begging breaks Stan, makes him swear loudly and blow his load all over Ford's exposed skin. Ford imagines that there is a lot, that Stan's come streaks up the line of Ford's abdominal hair to his lightly furred chest. Then, after Stan stops shuddering, Stan reaches down to rub his come into Ford's skin with the pad of his thumb. Ford feels a muted throb of lust through his blurry contentment.

"Mine," Stan murmurs. His voice is tender and his touch is possessive. "All mine."

Stan looks at Ford as though Ford is his entire universe, his brown eyes half-lidded and unwavering. It is exactly what Ford longs to see and the perfectness of Stan's expression should fill Ford with happiness; instead, it hollows Ford's chest and creates a vacuum where Ford's heart should be, a space that bitterness and longing are quick to fill.

"Mine," Ford echoes brokenly as his fantasy falls apart. "All mine."

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Long after the record has ceased playing and the sun has disappeared completely beneath the horizon, Ford lies in bed and tries very hard not to think of anything at all. Instead, he focuses on the mundane: the quiet darkness of the room, the steady beat of his calmed heart, and the muffled cries of seagulls scavenging for food. If he focuses, Ford believes that he can even hear the whisper of waves as they crash upon the nearby beach, a familiar and soothing sound that hovers at the edge of his awareness.

Our beach, Ford's traitorous mind murmurs. *Too narrow. Too rocky. All those reeds. No one's there during the day, let alone at night. It's pretty late. Stan probably took her there. Probably parked his car in the torn up parking lot next to our old playground. Probably smiled at her and—*

Abruptly and jerkily, Ford sits up. The sudden movement helps dislodge the squirming in his stomach. He grunts—low and wordless—in an effort to purge the remnants hooked like claws in his brain. When that doesn't work, he stands, pushes his sweat-damp briefs down his legs, and kicks the soiled underclothes towards the overflowing hamper near his desk. He also removes his thin athletic shirt before balling up the fabric and wiping the tacky come off his stomach.

"Pants," Ford mutters to himself as he casts his gaze around the messy room. "I need pants."

The hunt keeps Ford's mind occupied long enough for him to find a relatively clean pair of striped pajama bottoms and pull them on. They hang low on Ford's hips, lower than they had the last time Ford had worn them; it takes Ford a moment to realize that the elastic in the waist has been stretched loose, and that the only way that could have happened was if Stan had worn them for an extended period of time. An image of Stan lounging around their room in Ford's clothing worms into his brain and a quiet curse slips past his lips.

Goddamn, you're pathetic, Ford thinks sourly even as he shudders. *It's not like he wears your clothes on purpose. He's not—* Ford clenches his hands into six-fingered fists. *Stan's not like you. He's normal.*

Ford does not want to think about it but—as with all the other times he has masturbated to thoughts of his brother—he finds himself caught between his guilt and his logic, his thoughts oscillating infinitely between the social taboos of incest and his personal wants. None of the thoughts that arise are new, either; he has already turned his thoughts over in his mind a hundred thousand times and he knows that he will turn them over a hundred thousand more.

"Goddamnit," Ford hisses aloud, as thought the verbalization will relieve the unbearable pressure building in his chest. He staggers towards his bed and collapses onto the mattress. "Fuck, fuck, *fuck.*"

Ford lies on his back against the sheets and stares unseeingly at the motionless plane of the ceiling. He grits his teeth at the clench of his sore heart and labors to breathe against the crush of inevitability even while he yearns for Stan: for his body and his time and his devotion. He

knows that his yearning is foolish and futile, and that Stan is outside his reach. Ford *knows* this; yet he also knows that he is jealous because he is still hopeful, and it isn't Carla's fault—or Stan's—that he wants what he cannot have. He thinks of the first song on the B-side of *Green River*, and the words swell inside him, unbidden but not unexpected.

"I see a bad moon rising," Ford sings quietly. "I see trouble on the way. I see earthquakes and lightnin'—I see bad times today…"

Ford's voice is terrible, toneless and flat, but there is no one to judge him as he chokes on the lyrics, as he hits the wrong notes, as he repeats the familiar chorus over and over until his throat is dry and his eyes are wet. Perhaps one day he will outgrow his feelings—or, at the very least, be strong enough to set them aside—but for now he is left to struggle with his endless frustration.

So he sings, and sings, and sings, to forget that he is alone, and lonely, in the dark.

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